



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JAMES B. HUNT JR.
GOVERNOR

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DAVID MCCOY
SECRETARY

September 28, 1999

MEMORANDUM

TO: Terry Hopkins, P.E.
Unit Head - Traffic Congestion & Engineering Operations Unit
Traffic Engineering Branch

FROM: Craig Young *CY*
Project Development Engineer
Project Development & Environmental Analysis Branch

SUBJECT: Internal Distribution of the Environmental Assessment for TIP Project
U-2929, Franklin, SR 1659 (Depot Street) Extension from US 441
Business (Main Street) to SR 1323 (Riverview Street), Macon County,
Federal Aid Project Number STP-1659(1), State Project Number
8.2970401.

Attached please find a copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment for the subject project. Please review the attached Draft EA document. Unresolved issues still remain concerning the project's impacts to the critical habitat of the federally protected spotfin chub, the Appalachian elktoe mussel, and the Virginia spirea. Coordination with the appropriate resource agencies will continue during the final design stage of this project. Issues that will be addressed during final design include: stormwater drainage and sedimentation control measures along the project, possible wetland restoration potential for two existing degraded wetlands in the vicinity of the project, and the location of hazardous spill catch basins that will be placed along the project to protect the water quality of the Little Tennessee River.

I would appreciate your comments by October 20, 1999. If you have any questions please contact me at (919) 733-7844 extension 229 or by e-mail at cyoung@dot.state.nc.us

CMY/

Attachments

Franklin
SR 1659 (Depot Street) Extension
From US 441 Business (Main Street)
to SR 1323 (Riverview Street), Macon County
Federal Aid Project Number STP-1659(1)
State Project Number 8.2970401
TIP Project U-2929

• TCP has original
• This is partial copy
for our file.

**PRELIMINARY
DRAFT
DO NOT CIRCULATE**

Administrative Action

Environmental Assessment

U. S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

and

N. C. Department of Transportation

Submitted pursuant to 42 U. S. C. 4332(2)(C)

Cooperating Agency

Tennessee Valley Authority

Date

William D. Gilmore, P. E., Manager,
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch, NCDOT

Date

Nicholas L. Graf
Division Administrator, FHWA

Franklin
SR 1659 (Depot Street) Extension
From US 441 Business (Main Street)
to SR 1323 (Riverview Street), Macon County
Federal Aid Project Number STP-1659(1)
State Project Number 8.2970401
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I. NEED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

A. General Description of Project

The North Carolina Department of Transportation proposes to construct a new two-lane, 24-foot road with 8-foot shoulders extending Depot Street (SR 1659) from its intersection with US 441 Business to Riverview Street (SR 1323) (see Figure 2). The project also calls for realigning and/or widening SR 1323 where the proposed facility will intersect with this road. NCDOT includes this project in the 2000-2006 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Right of way acquisition is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2000 and construction is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2001.

The project lies in western North Carolina and is located in the mid-eastern part of Macon County. The proposed Depot Street Extension is located adjacent to the Little Tennessee River in the town of Franklin (see Figure 1).

The total cost of the improvements recommended in this document is \$2,650,000, which includes \$1,900,000 for construction and \$750,000 for right of way acquisition. The TIP includes a total funding for this project of \$2,000,000 which includes \$1,100,000 for construction and \$900,000 for right of way acquisition.

B. Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide an efficient, safe, and direct route for through traffic between US 441 Business (Main Street) and NC 28 as an alternative to the existing route through downtown Franklin. The proposed project will also provide improved access for traffic traveling from north of Franklin to the Depot Street industrial area, located south of the project, and to eastern Franklin.

The predominant traffic flow in Macon County is traffic traveling along NC 28 from the northern part of the county, in the vicinity of Fontana Lake, through Franklin to US 441 East towards Asheville. Currently, traffic traveling on these two routes has to navigate dangerous curves, numerous intersections, steep grades, and on street parking through downtown Franklin. Alternate routes include Riverview Street and Iolita Street northeast of the downtown area. These routes contain steep grades, sharp curves, poor

sight distances, narrow travelways, and contain large volumes of traffic accessing the numerous residential properties in the vicinity along with the Angel Medical Center, located along Riverview Street.

In 1999, approximately 12,100 vehicles per day travel US 441 Business through the downtown area. This number is expected to rise to an estimated 20,200 vehicles per day in 2025. Of the current volume, trucks comprise approximately five percent, considerably higher than the average two to three percent on similar roadways. Currently, US 441 Business through downtown Franklin consists of a steep grade, tight turning radii onto side streets, and on-street parking in the central business district. On-street parking impedes traffic flow through the area by restricting the width of the travel corridor and causing delays from the ingress and egress of vehicles from the parking spaces. As a result of the steep grades, heavy truck traffic, and tight turning radii, the capacity of the facility is ultimately reduced and congestion in the area will increase. Alternate routes to the US 441 Business / NC 28 corridor consist of narrow two-lane roadways with limited sight distances, sharp curves, and steep grades.

This existing restricted corridor through downtown Franklin is not conducive to traffic attempting to access NC 28, via US 441 Business, north of town. With the proposed project in place, US 441 Business in downtown Franklin, Riverview Street, and Iolta Street will benefit from reduced traffic volumes, primarily heavy vehicles (trucks, semi's, and tractor trailers) in the vicinity of downtown Franklin. Lower traffic volumes will improve safety and traffic operations in the central business district of Franklin. This project is shown in the Franklin Thoroughfare Plan adopted by both the Town of Franklin and NCDOT in 1994.

C. Characteristics of Existing Conditions

1. Length of Roadway Section Studied

The length of the proposed Depot Street Extension project, from US 441 Business to SR 1462 (Riverview Street), is 1.1 km (0.7 mile).

2. Route Classification

Depot Street (SR 1659) and Riverview Street (SR 1462) are classified as rural minor collectors in the statewide functional classification system. The Franklin Thoroughfare Plan identifies Depot Street as a major thoroughfare and lists Riverview Street as a minor thoroughfare.

3. Existing Cross-Section

SR 1659 (Depot Street)

The existing section of Depot Street from Palmer to Main Street is a 10.8 m (36 feet) face to face curb and gutter three-lane roadway.